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ABSTRACT

Intended to relate contemporary attitudes toward the representation of the human body with some aspects of the ongoing debate on postmodernism, this paper begins by briefly discussing the work of Michel Foucault during the modern period (1790-1950). A review of the particular ways in which Foucault relates the body to ideas of power relations, together with a review of the literature on ways in which postmodernism deals with similar problems in contemporary society, provides the basis for investigating how a synthesis of the two approaches could give a theoretical basis for an analysis of the representation of the body in this new postmodern world. Examples taken from television commercials in which the human body is featured in some way are used to illustrate postmodern attitudes toward the representation of the body. The paper concludes by arguing that there is an urgent need to monitor, analyze, and intervene in discourses related to new technologies, the body, and pleasures; a need to review the language and the object of criticism; and a need to theorize the new forms that power relations take. (50 end notes) (CGD)

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NEW TECHNOLOGIES - NEW BODIES ?

A Discussion of TV Commercials

Paper Presented to the

1986 International Television Studies Conference

Dimitris Eleftheriotis

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"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
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Introduction

This paper's objective is to relate contemporary attitudes towards the representation of the human body with some aspects of the ongoing debate on postmodernism. The postmodernist theoretical discourse attempts in one way or another (in fields as disperate as aesthetics, economics, politics etc) to analyse the peculiarities of the nature of contemporary societies. The work of Michel Foucault is, in a sense, of a similar character: he was concerned with a number of discources (medicine, science in general, madness, sexuality, the penal system etc) developed in what can be described as the modern period (that is the period which 'began about 1790-1800 and lasted until 1950'[1]). Foucault emphasizes the importance of the body for the deployment of the discourses of 'modernity'.

If the case is that there is a radical mutation in the nature of most of these discourses and practices, it might be logical to expect changes in the representation of the body. We shall briefly discuss the particular ways in which Foucault relates the body to ideas of power relations , then the ways in which postmodernism deals with similar problems in contemporary society, in order to investigate how a synthesis of the two 'approaches' could give a theoretical basis for an analysis of the representation of the body in this 'new postmodern world'.

Foucault

It is beyond the scope of this paper (and certainly beyond my theoretical competence) to extensively discuss Foucault's methodological propositions. We should discuss briefly, nevertheless,

two of his basic notions: genealogy and power.

Genealogy as a method rejects linear historical schemata, problematizes determinism, privileges discontinuities and details: 'it must record the singularity of events outside of any monotonous finality; it must seek them in the most unpromising places, in what we tend to feel is without history - in sentiments, love, conscience, insticts; it must be sensitive to their recurrence, not in order to trace the gradual curve of their evolution, but to isolate the different scenes where they engaged in different roles'[2]. This genealogical method lies behind the use in this paper of such disparate discourses as breakdance, bodybuilding, medicine and horror films, without, nevertheless, claiming any deep 'knowledge of details' or 'vast accumulation of source material' that Foucault's genealogy requires. In the genealogical method the body is more than the privileged object of analysis: 'genealogy, as an analysis of descent, is thus situated within the articulation of the body and history. Its task is to expose a body totally imprinted by history and the process of history's destruction of the body'[3].

Foucault's theorization of power is, in many ways, a polemical criticism of numerous versions of what he calls the 'repressive hypothesis': Marxist, psychoanalytic, 'juridical' concepts of power. Power is not possessed by a caste, a class, or a system, it does not work by forbidding certain activities, repressing desires, dominating individuals; power is productive, initiating and multiplying discourses, practices, pleasures; power permeates relations and institutions at all possible levels, it exists in a complex network of 'micro-powers': 'the omnipresence of power: not because it

has the privilege of consolidating everything under its invincible unity, but because it is produced from one moment to the next, at every point, or rather in every relation from one point to another. Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything but because it comes from everywhere'[4].

In Discipline and Punish and The History of Sexuality Foucault analyzes how power relations are invested in the body in the 'disciplinary' societies of the modern period. The idea that society 'works' on the body is not in itself new (it is central in - among many - the work of Deleuze and Guattari and Pierre Bourdieu). What is extremely important in Foucault's work, however, is the particular way that the triptych body-power-knowledge is theoretically articulated.

The notion of a 'political economy-technology of the body' provides the connecting link between the three. On one level the body becomes directly involved in a political field, the field of power relations: 'power relations have an immediate hold upon it (the body); they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs. This political investment of the body is bound up, in accordance with complex reciprocal relations, with its economic use; it is largely as a force of production that the body is invested with relations of power and domination'[5]. Modern societies are characterized by certain methods - 'disciplines' (hence disciplinary societies) which impose upon the body and its forces a particular way of docility - utility.

The production of docile and useful bodies is one of the aspects of the political technology of the body. Another is the production of 'scientific discourses'. The two are not in any sense

unrelated - on the contrary: '....power and knowledge directly imply one another; there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not pressupose and constitute at the same time relations'[6].

Modern episteme is characterized by a movement which absolutely centralizes man in two ways: as an object he becomes the locus of knowledge (in medicine, illness is to be discovered in the body, the forces of counter-nature can be rationalized, knowledge breaks away from the metaphysics of evil and directs its 'gaze' to the body); as a subject he becomes the bearer of the scientific 'look' , the center of power and wisdom. Modern episteme is a science of Man both as an object and as a subject.

Postmodernism

The purpose for the use in this paper of the term 'political technology of the body', is to a great extend tactical (the term 'bio-power' could be used equally well, after all): given the privileged position that new technologies occupy in postmodernism, it establishes a 'channel of communication' between Foucault's theory and the postmodern debate; it provides an axis along which an argument can be constructed around the representation of the body. Contemporary forms of power and knowledge can be analysed in terms of new technologies, not in a sense of technological determinism but by understanding new technologies as 'some privileged representational shorthand for grasping a network of power and control... - the whole new decentred global network of the third stage of capital itself'[7].

This third stage of capitalism or 'post-industrial society' or 'late' or 'multinational' capitalism can be defined in terms of a technological 'break', namely 'machine production of electronic and nuclear-powered apparatuses since the 40's of the 20th century'[8]. Two concepts have become increasingly popular in analyses of contemporary modes of production[9]: the principle of the seperation of the software from the hardware (with the former developing rapidly and becoming the determining factor), and the Perpetual Innovation Economy, which is based on perpetual innovation of the software, unstoppable creation of 'new' products, and the monstrous increase in the number of people producing software. We can see emerging, then, a metamorphosis in the nature of labour resulting to the development of new skills involving forces of the body quite different from those that the disciplinary society encouraged and promoted.

One of the mechanisms of descipline, according to Foucault, is the body-object articulation, 'the instrumental coding of the body' : 'over the whole surface of contact between the body and the object it handles, power is introduced, fastening them to one another. It constitutes a body-weapon, body-tool, body-machine complex'.[10] What about the 'new' objects, then, the personal computer, the various tele-control machines?

According to Jean Baudrillard,in a postmodern society we are dealing with a new system of objects or, to be precise, 'there is no longer any system of objects'; that is, the opposition subject/object is not meaningful any more. In the modern period people 'project themselves into their objects with their effects and their representations, their fantasies of possession, loss, mourning, jealousy'.[11] The postmodern objects are radically different, they do not offer themselves as instruments reanacting fantasies of Prome-

thean adventures, but they place the 'user' in a universe of communication, a surface of interrelations and interactions, a network of information. 'Today the scene and mirror no longer exist; instead there is a screen and network' - the disappearance of the 'scene' (a private scene in which the projections take place) can be understood in terms of the blurring of the boundaries between the public and the private in which new technologies play an important part (home-banking, shopping and managing business from the home, etc)[12]. This leads to a 'satellization' of the living experience: 'we are here at the controls of a micro-satellite, in orbit, living no longer as an actor or dramaturge but as a terminal of multiple networks'[13].

A similar, in a sense, point emerges in Barthes's discussion of the New Citroen (significantly, in terms of periodization, Mythologies was first published in 1957): a sense of 'driving' replaces aggressive fantasies of speed. To come back to the question of the body, the 'Jet-man' might well be one of the very first 'descriptions' of postmodern man: he 'no longer seems to know either adventure of destiny, but only a condition. Yet this condition is at first sight less human than anthropological: mythically, the jet-man is defined less by his courage than by his weight, his diet and his habits (temperance, frugality, continence) .....everything happens as if there had been a sudden mutation between the earlier creatures of propeller-mankind and the later ones of jet-mankind'[14]. The body is reduced to a system of data - it ceases to be 'useful', it becomes 'operational'. But we will have the chance to develop this point later.

According to Hal Foster's useful distinction, there are,at least, two 'postmodernisms'[15]: a neoconservative postmodernism (defined very much in terms of style e.g. Robert Venturi in architecture, Julian Schnabel in painting), and a post-structuralist postmodernism (preoccupied basically with 'philosophical' issues such as history, representation and the subject: Derrida, Lyotard, Baudrillard). The two categories have clear differences and similarities and even within each category there have been developed contradictory positions in relation to certain issues. I hope that some of the complications might become clearer after this discussion of postmodern knowledge.

In his infuential work The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge, Jean-Francois Lyotard offers a comprehensive (and controversial) analysis of contemporary knowledge. New technologies become, once again, quite central; the so called, computerization of society entails a transformation in the nature of knowledge; knowledge must be codified into the new languages of computers, transmitted through new channels, controlled by new authorities. Questions such as 'what constitutes knowledge?', 'is it the state or multinational companies who will control the vast data banks?' have become crucially important. But even more important is the bringing into the forefront of the question of legitimation.

Modernity, according to Lyotard, produced two master narratives (grand recits) of legitimation of knowledge: the emancipation of man and the dialectic of the spirit (the first is more 'political' the second more 'philosophical'). Two examples of the former would be Marxism which legitimates itself as a science, in terms of the promise of emancipation of the workers from the tyranny of capitalism, and technological progress which justifies itself in terms of a liberation of humanity from its natural limitations '

and restrictions.

Postmodernity, on the contrary, is characterized by a crisis in legitimation, a kind of 'fall' of the master narratives. Lyotard's theorization of postmodern science is based on an analysis of the nature of the 'social bond'; the latter, from the postmodern perspective, becomes a matter of 'language games', a kind of atomization of the social into flexible networks of language games - 'a self does not amount to much, but no self is an island; each exists in a fabric of relations that is now more complex and mobile than ever before'[16]. Language games are to be understood in terms of agonistics and this is the crucial aspect in Lyotard's formulation: it is in clear opposition to both Baudrillard's 'death of the social' (the social still exists in the agonistic aspect of society), and Habermas's idea of a consensus community (the social is a matter of 'move'-'countermove' relations, disagreement).

Postmodern science, then, is all about 'new moves' in these language games, new moves that produce instabilities rather than consensus: 'it is changing the meaning of the word knowledge, while expressing how such a change can take place. It is producing not the known but the unknown. And it suggests a model of legitimation that has nothing to do with maximized performance[17], but has as its basis difference understood as paralogy'[18]. What is at stake here is the idea of subjectivity; Lyotard's formulation of knowledge and the social implies a dissolution of the self into infinitesimal networks of communication and information: the decentred subject of postmodernism.

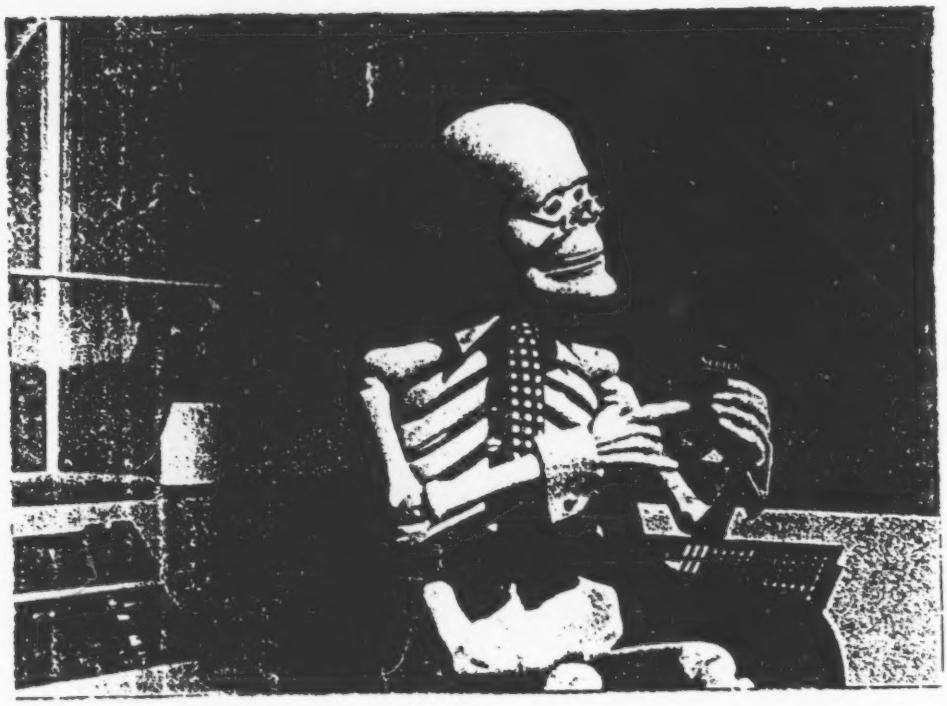
And this is precisely the aspect that the two postmodernisms

that we earlier mentioned, have in common. We have so far discussed poststructuralist postmodernism in its deconstructive search for instabilities. On the other hand, neoconservative postmodernism seems to champion a return to the subject (a return to historicity, to the great artist, to a more 'human' architecture). But, as Foster explains,[19] the techniques of textuality and pastiche that they respectively employ, do not 'differ in any deep epistemic way'; they are both about the breakdown of artistic or scientific forms/ discourses, the disentrenchment of representation, the fragmentation and dissolution of the subject.

Foucault's following prophesy, then, seems absolutely pertinent: 'if (the character of knowledge of things and their order) were to disappear as they appeared, if some event of which we can at the moment do no more than sense the possibility- without knowing either what its form will be or what it promises - were to cause them to crumble, as the ground of Classical thought did, at the end of the 18th century, then one can certainly wager that man would be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea' [20].

But at this point at which the circle seems to be completed with this return to Foucault, I would like to leave this rather lengthy discussion and turn to an analysis of some TV commercials.

A human skeleton is the 'hero' of this famous Scotch videocassette advertisement. The emphasis is on the ability of the tape to last without picture deterioration. A direct association with death



is disavowed by the use of a series of familiar, reassuring signs: the skeleton is animated, he moves, talks, looks at you, he is 'dressed' with a tie and a collar, he wears glasses; a Buddy Holly tune ('Not fade away') is used in the soundrack; the skeleton of a bird in a cage can be seen - as a result the skeleton is emphasized as being an 'aesthetic' convention and not a condition or a part of the body. Despite these mechanisms of disavowal, I find this advertisement very hostile towards the human body.

As Judith Williamson has pointed out[21] in advertisements a product must be given certain qualities, certain meanings. This

is usually obtained by establishing correlations between a system of objects or persons and the product. In the case of the Scotch videocassette ad 'durability' is signified; the tape outlasts human beings; unlike the latter the product does not fade away. What is particularly aggressive in this ad is the fact that durability is signified at the expense of the human body (the weaker term of the comparison). Furthermore, if we follow Williamson's analysis, 'a product is then, made to give meaning back to us, and create a new system of groups. Products whose only meaning derives from a re-hash of mythological elements already present in society, develop such an aura of significance that they tell something about their buyers and actually become adjectival in relation to them. There are the 'Pepsi People', the 'Sunsilk girls', and so on'[22]. The initial peculiarity of the 'Scotch People' appears to be that they are nothing more than skeletons. It will be necessary, then, to discuss 'skeletons' for a while.

A skeleton is the body minus the flesh, the organs, etc, in other words without all the complicated, 'messy', in a sense, parts of the body. A skeleton is a body without depth, without interiority, one in which the play between the visible and the invisible does not exist, a simplified, 'clean' body. A skeleton is a body which cannot be ascribed to an individual, it bears no easily identifiable signs of gender, race, age, it is beyond fashion, style, strength or weakness - it is a body without history. A skeleton is not only devoid of flesh but (and probably as a result of this) of individuality, too; it does not belong to an individual it belongs to the species.

The advertisement, on the other hand, goes someway towards constructing an identity for the 'Scotch' skeleton: male, middle class, white. What I would like to argue, nevertheless, is that like Barthes's 'jet-man' these 'skeleton people' belong to a new 'race', a new postmodern 'species' of man.

Postmodernism's 'commitment to surface and to the superficial in all senses of the word'[23], is echoed by the lack of depth of the skeleton, by its white, uniform, clean surface - a surface very much resembling that of the outer shell of a computer. Nature (death) is 'colonized' in this apparently happy cohabitation of TV equipment and skeletons. The robotic movement of the skeleton differentiates him from the now obsolete, 'old-fashioned', mechanical body of the modern period; his body is the product of a brand new technology.

We can now probably see annother dimension in the aggression against the body that the Scotch ad manifests. Jameson has discussed the antagonistic relationship between the postmodern landscape and the human body in the context of contemporary painting and sculpture[24]; more relevant to the present analysis seems to be, though, Baudrillard's statement: 'it is well known how the simple presence of the television changes the habitat into a kind of archaic envelope, a vestige of human relations whose very survival remains perplexing'[25]. The Scotch ad resolves this antithesis clearly at the expense of the human body; the ad's project is not to 'humanize' television but to create a perfect 'habitat' for it; and part of this habitat is the postmodern man in the form of skeleton people.

In an advertisement of the SONY Trinitron television set we see numerous shots of a sitting room with a couch positioned opposite to a TV set; all the shots come from the same position, behind and slightly above the television in such a way as part of the set's back is visible, with the couch occupying the centre of the frame. Each, of the otherwise identical shots, represents, a 'stage' in the development of an individual: initially the couch is empty, then a baby appears, he grows up, becomes a student, gets married, has children and grandchildren, gets very old, and eventually disappears. A voice over says: 'SONY Trinitron designed to last'.

Durability, again, is the quality given to the product; and again it is signified at the expense of the human body (which by the end disappears). What seems to be different from the Scotch ad is the representation of the body: the 'SONY Trinitron' people may be male, middle class, white, also, but they are 'real', with flesh and history. After a closer analysis of the extremely condensed 'narrative' of the ad, nevertheless, the 'SONY' and the 'Scotch' people seem to be rather similar , two sides of the same coin.

The body of the hero of the SONY ad seems to be absolutely useless - restricted for ever in the enclosure of the sitting room it does not determine, in any sense, the development of the narrative: the seminal events of life happen automatically, without any active participation of the 'hero'; they are brought into the sitting room from an outside symbolic space, they are not produced by the body's deployment of its forces; his children and grandchildren (and the 'hero' himself) are like test-tube babies, produced in a miraculous way. Unlike the 'Scotch' skeletons the 'SONY' people are given flesh but it is not for their 'use', it is only 'useful'

for the TV - this 'flesh-eater'in this symbolic exchange between product and referent system[26]: ' this body, our body, often appears simply superfluous, basically useless in its extension, in the multiplicity and complexity of its organs, its tissues and functions, since today everything is concentrated in the brain and in genetic codes, which alone sum up the operational definition of being'[27].

If in the case of the skeleton the postmodernist preoccupation with surface and cleanliness is expressed by the lack of 'flesh', in the SONY ad the same preoccupations seem to be inscribed in the text on another level: the narrative is a succession of very typical, clearly defined, instances of life; a kind of 'skeleton' of the 'body' of life with again all the messy bits missing (irregularities and unusual events, accidents and diseases, the whole narrative 'depth' of motivation, causality, etc)[28].

The sitting room of the ad becomes a screen in which life is displayed, 'an immanent surface where operations unfold', the invisible, because of the way the ad is shot, screen of the SONY Trinitron. The 'hero' of the ad does not project himself into the only object he possesses - the TV - , his body becomes a part of the 'smooth operational surface of communication'[29] that the ad sets up as the sole condition of his existence.

The Scotch and the SONY ads demonstrate postmodern attitudes towards the representation of the body; a tendency to get rid of the materiality, the flesh, the forces of the body; the disappearance of the powerful, charismatic individual; the dominance of the screen and the network over the mirror and the scene; they register a crisis of the body and a crisis of the subject. The fact that these attitudes are expressed in a particularly aggressive way is not, probably, unrelated to the nature of the advertised products (TV equipment);

we will discuss this point later.

Aggression, however, is not a 'characteristic'postmodern quality: it seems to belong to a context of Promethean, athletic technology and modernist art, in the 'hot' universe of modernity. From this point of view, the advertisement of the RANK XEROX photocopyier is more 'typically' postmodernist. In this ad a man standing beside a photocopyier exalts the qualities of the machine; the various features of the photocopyier (magnified, black and white or colour copies etc) that he refers to, are demonstrated visually by corresponding changes in his image. The tone of the ad is playful: the bringing together of two normally seperated moments may be schizophrenic but is clearly amusing: the stasis of the photographic image (with the undertones of death that bears with it[30]) is continously negated, the past/present opposition ceases to be meaningful (past, present and future are interchangeable), everything becomes a matter of production and reproduction and reproduction...- an apotheosis of progress and kinesis.

Once again, nevertheless, the body falls victim of the textual strategies of the ad. The image of the man autonomous and in control in the opening shot is , eventually, reduced to a copy of the original, a mere instance in a seemingly endless process of reproduction. The collapse of any sense of difference between the real and the image strips the body of any material existence; in a similar way the opposition between subject and object ceases to exist.

This objectification of man, this loss of mastery over the image and the visual, signals another crisis, a crisis of masculinity: 'investment in the look is not privileged in women as in men. More than the other senses, the eye objectifies and masters. It sets

at a distance, maintains a distance'[31].

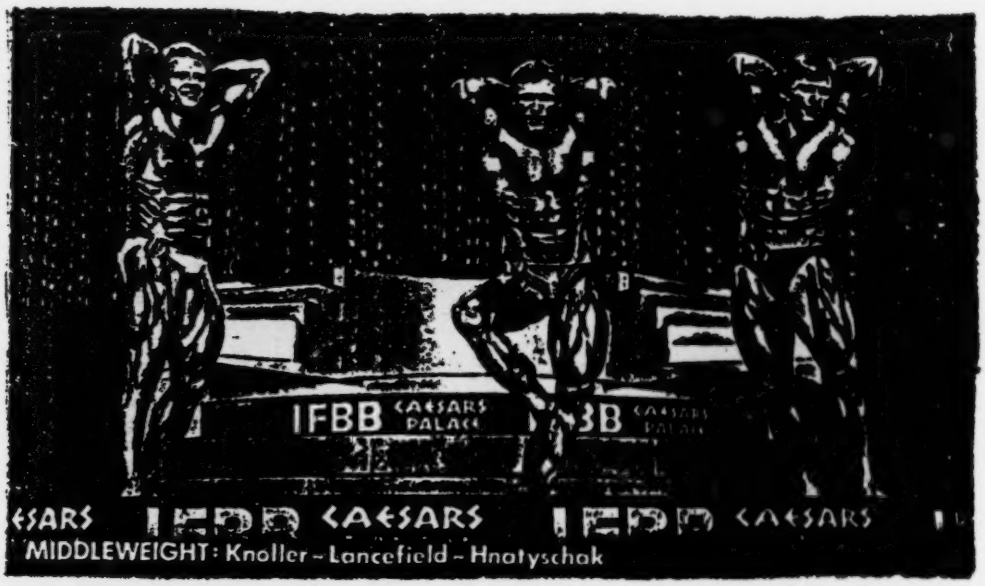
It appears significant that the advertisements we have discussed, so far, express anxiety about male, white, middle-class bodies. Foucault's analysis of the nature of the deployment of sexuality in the 19th century can possibly explain this; 'the primary concern was not repression of the sex of the classes to be exploited, but rather the body, vigor, longevity, progeniture, and descent of the classes that "ruled". This was the purpose for which the deployment of sexuality was first established, as a new distribution of pleasures, discourses, truths, and powers; it has to be seen as the self-affirmation of one class rather than the enslavement of another: a defense, a protection, a strengthening, and an exaltation that were eventually extended to others - at the cost of different transformations - as a means of social control and political subjugation'[32]. It is only reasonable, then, to assume that the crisis of the modern body would primarily affect those who were mainly responsible for and 'profited' by the deployment of sexuality.

It seems that the transformations in the representation of the body constitute a historical 'event' in the Foucaultian sense : 'an event.....is not a decision, a treaty, a reign, or a battle, but the reversal of a relationship of forces, the usurpation of power, the appropriation of a vocabulary turned against those who had once used it, a feeble domination that poisons itself as it grows lax, the entry of a "masked" other'[33]. In order to understand, then, in a more comprehensive way, some of the dimensions of this 'event' (instabilities, contradictions, points of resistance and patterns emerging in this new postmodern relations of power) we should, as Foucault's methodology suggests, try to relate this analysis of TV commercials to other discources of the body.

Discources of the Body

There is now a proliferation of discources of physical fitness and beauty, involving such practices as jogging, aerobics, body-building and so on. It is worth concentrating for a while, on the last category. The way in which the mechanisms of discipline (in disciplinary societies) implicate the body can be described, in Foucaultian terms, as a form of 'body-building'. But it is different from the increasingly popular 'sport' in a significant aspect: whereas the objective of disciplinary societies is to produce useful and docile bodies, body-building strives to create 'beautiful', 'decorative' bodies. In body-building, the body, extracted from a realm of utility (the body and its useful forces, masculinity defined as action, violence, dexterity etc), fits into the world of images (in competitions male body-builders covered in oil, flex and stress their muscles assuming quasi-erotic poses)..

But this, nevertheless, seems to be the sphere traditionally reserved for women. On the other hand, as weight-training and body-building establish themselves as popular and fashionable activities



among women, a new attitude towards female 'beauty' emerges: women have to work for their beauty, building rather than anihilating flesh (as diet for instance, does). The 'useful' bodies of modernity, as we have seen, are directly related to relations of production; women, largely excluded from the productive process, were given a 'useless', objectified body. In a postmodern world obsessed with the image, women are allowed to have a more active relationship with their bodies; it seems OK to work for beauty. After all in aerobics (it can be argued that it started the current 'revolution' in female body image) the instructors are not, usually, specialists but glamorous film and TV stars.

The idea of exercise,'work' for women does not in iself challenge male domination. Body-building and aerobics have undoubtly provided some of the most fetishised images of women. One can discern, though, the emergence of more challenging images - most notably, that of Bev Francis in the film Pumping Iron II: The Women . As Charlotte Greig argues : 'female body-building is functional, positive and unpopular enough to be feminist; narcissistic, competative and individualistic enough to be modern; ambiguous enough to fascinate both sexes'[34].

There seems to be another paradox, here: on the one hand the 'new' body relies heavily on working on the muscles, but on the other, by associating this 'work' directly with the 'image' and 'surface', it negates any materiality of the body. Flesh then, is presented as something to be remoulded, as a 'Nature' to be colonized. Flesh is,in a sense, an enemy - the usual instruction for aerobic exercises is 'do it until the muscles burn', in body-building you really have to make muscles suffer, to feel all the pain.

Grace Jones's seems to be an ideal postmodern body: in its geometry it becomes a perfectly reproducible shape, an image par excellence.

But there is someone who is even closer to perfection: Max Headroom, the man without body. The 'birth' of Max Headroom is remarkable. He first appears in the Channel 4 film 20 Minutes into the Future; reporter Edison Carter (in this science- fiction story he is a character taken from film- noir) dies in an accident (eventually life is restored to him by advanced technology); a computer expert runs his new 'scan system' on Carter's brain, computes it and stores it. By accident Max Headroom is created: a computer graphics man with the brain of Carter. The story 'begs' for a symbolic reading: the death of a 'modern' man gives birth to Max Headroom, the most popular TV person in the fictional world of the

film and, indeed, very popular in our television.

The bodies of Grace Jones and Max Headroom, are bodies without depth, without flesh. They are characteristically different in this aspect, from the bodies of the 19th century medical discourse: 'in anatomo-clinical experience, the medical eye must see the illness spread before it, horizontally and vertically in graded depth, as it penetrates into the body, as it advances into its bulk, as it circumvents or lifts its masses, as it descends into its depths'[35].

The introduction of new technologies in contemporary medicine has drastically changed its diagnostic and therapeutic methods (this does not necessarily imply any serious change in the nature of the 'gaze' of the medical eye). It is not any more necessary, in certain cases, to 'open up a few bodies' in order to restore health or discover the 'locus' of the diseases: doctors can now shatter kidney stones with sonic waves and operate with laser beams; with a new machine they can see into the brain, the heart, any organ of the body: 'after the molecules in my body were all lined up (by the use of a powerful magnetic field) they gave out radiofrecuency signals which were analysed by a powerful computer. A picture of my heart at the various stages of contraction materialised in the monitor screen'[36], a medical corresponent for The Sunday Times, describes. Technology, then, performs an innocuous 'penetration into the body', and, in this way, helps the doctor to keep his/her hands clean from flesh and its 'dirty' messiness.

But there is a discourse in which the body is represented with an overemphasized 'realism': the horror films of the 70's and the 80's. Indeed, in recent analyses, the realistic way that the destruction of the body is portrayed is seen as a cha-

racteristic of the genre in its contemporary form. As Pete Boss notes, 'a different tone and subjectivity prevails in contemporary films....the sensational acts of Frankenstein's "workshop of filthy creation" - the twisted bodily figurations of Promethean guilt - and the gothic legacy have given way to matter-of-fact and routine instances of physical helplessness,... (to an) unquestionable obsession with the physical constitution and destruction of the human body'[38]. This films, then, demonstrate a kind of 'Return of the Body', in its tissues and muscles and organs and blood, as a meaningful symbolic scene. And the hysteric tone of this 'return' testifies to the general 'crisis' of the body, to a 'fear of one's own body, of how one controls and relates to it'[39].

In a 'universe of global communication and immense information networks' the body becomes, in many ways, an undesirable burden. A recurring postmodern fantasy seems to be, to get rid of your body, to travel with the speed of light, to conquer time and space (the credits sequence of The Tube seems to be a good example). Gillian Skirrow in her analysis of video games, remarks: 'in arcade games you expect to be attacked by sheets of kamikase aliens, but in the adventure games it is your own behaviour that is suicidal. This is frequently made explicit in the names of games and their software houses - e.g. "Get Liquidated!", "Kamikase", "Terminal Software". The unlikelihood of your survival seems in fact to be a criterion of a "good" game, part of its addictiveness'[40]. This suicidal behaviour is in line with the 'anti-flesh', 'anti-body' aspect of postmodernism.

Video games seem to belong to the categories of games of

chance (alea) and games of vertigo (ilynx), according to Caillois's classification[41]. As Baudrillard argues[42], these two categories are becoming increasingly dominant, while the categories of games of expression (mimicry) and games of competition (agon) lose their grip. New forms of dance (a game of expression par excellence) emerge, that privilege vertigo, in breakdance, the body upside-down rotates at dizzying speed; breakdance similarly privileges chance by tempting injury.

Conclusion

The ongoing, gradual replacement (or transformation[43]) of a largely 'reified', 'dominant but dead' modernism by post-modernism is heralded by theorists, critics and the public with mixed feelings of optimism and pessimism, anxiety and relief.

Pessimism and anxiety - because of the collapse of categories full of symbolic meaning : Nature, landscape, time, public and private space, the body. The fall (or the crisis) of the grand narratives of modernity causes a 'crisis of utopia', or of ways people understand the present and envisage the future. The lack of utopia or historic perspective has given rise to 'fantasies of sheer catastrophe and inexplicable cataclysm - from visions of "terrorism" on the social level to those of cancer on the personal'[44], to 'a paranoid or conspiracist tendency in social and political thinking'[45].

Foucault's iconoclastic argument that Marxism is not an 'immense theoretical revolution' but just another modern episteme, is in line with a 'spirit of inquiry' on how 'oppositional' really, are some of the 'oppositional' discourses.

From this perspective, one can manage to see positivism and surrealism, Frankenstein and Baudelaire, myths of emancipation through technological progress and Marxism, in a slightly less polarized way. I quote extensively from Marshall Berman's stimulating work All that is Solid Melts into Air :

'This, then, is the setting for Baudelaire's primal modern scene: "I was crossing the boulevard, in a great hurry, in the midst of a moving chaos, with death galloping at me from every side". The archetypal modern man, as we see him here, is a pedestrian thrown into the maelstrom of modern city traffic, a man alone contending against an agglomeration of mass and energy that is heavy, fast, and lethal.....Baudelaire shows how modern city life forces new moves on everyone; but he shows, too, how in doing this it also paradoxically enforces new modes of freedom. A man who knows how to move in and around and through the traffic can go anywhere, down any of the endless urban corridors where traffic itself is free to go.....(and) what if the multitudes of men and women who are terrorized by modern traffic could learn to confront it together? this will happen.....in the days of the Commune in Paris in 1871, and again in Petersburg in 1905 and 1917, in Berlin in 1918, in Barcelona in 1936, in Budapest in 1956, in Paris again in 1968, and in dozens of cities all over the world, from Baudelaire's time to our own - the boulevard will be abruptly transformed into the stage for a new primal modern scene. This will not be the sort of scene that Napoleon or Haussmann would like to see, but nonetheless one that their mode of urbanism will have helped to make'[46].

I find the quotation fascinating in its descriptive power (and the particularly 'modern' feelings and emotions it demosntra-

tes) of the polysemy of the modern scene. But we know that in many ways, this scene has ceased to exist, and Venturi's famous statement 'Americans don't need piazzas - they should be home watching TV' can be very painful, indeed.

In one way or another, what disappears is a particular form of power: Man's mastery - and a particular form of 'subjectivity': the powerful conquering hero (a scientist, a poet, or a revolutionary leader); the centered, unitary, masculine subject. And this does not seem to be necessarily painful, not for everybody, anyway: 'for what is this subject that, threatened by loss, is so bemoaned? Bourgeois perhaps, patriarchal certainly - it is the phallocentric order of subjectivity. For some, for many, this is indeed a great loss - and may lead to narcissistic laments about the end of art, of culture, of the West. But for others, precisely for Others, this is no great loss at all'[47]. The collapse of Mastery and its grand narratives has opened up space for a coexestence of different culture - pluralism is postmodernism's trademark. But more significantly perhaps, the crisis of representation can be fruitfully exploited by those who have become its victims[48].

If we consider our period transitional (it is obviously a schematic term- it presupposes linearity; what is history, in its genealogical sense, if not a perpetual transition from one set of events to another, of one form of relations of power to another?) it is reasonable to expect a mixture of conflicting attitudes to be registered in different discourses and on many levels.

A particular category of TV advertisements (like the contemporary horror films) does not express the usual technophobia, bodies and machines are not represented in an antagonistic way; the body, in one way or another, (even at its own expense) is in

a harmonious relation with the machine, it becomes a part of the networks of information, in the case of the SONY ad it even becomes the screen of the TV set. This is not always the case , though; in most of the advertisements of computers there is an obvious effort to 'endow' the product with such qualities as friendliness, accessibility, even naivity. A Charles Chaplin character and a baby are used to advertise the IBM and the Ericsson computers, respectively. The retreat to reassuring, entertaining techniques testifies to the grip that intense feelings of technophobia have on our relations with the 'advanced' new technology.

The difference in the attitude towards these two sets of products (TV equipment/personal computers) can be understood in terms of a'sexualised' technology: 'sexuality is now such an important form of control and so implicated in discourses of power and domination that technology itself has had to become sexualised in order for it to be apparently under control'[49]. Computers, then, with all the male attributes they have (scientificity, rationality, binary thinking) seem to challenge fantasies of mastery and control. Whereas, as Skirrow argues, the TV screen (at least in the case of video games) can symbolically become the mother's body within which male fantasies of battle and destruction are enacted and anxieties dispelled, the computer seems more difficult to 'manage'.

The instabilities in the deployment of the new technologies have a direct impact on the representation of the body in TV advertisements, as I hope I have shown. The fragmentation of the postmodern subject goes hand in hand with a crisis of the modern body. Both the representation of the body and the form that power

relations have taken, in contemporary society, have changed. We must be, then, a little careful not to overevaluate the current crisis of the body and the subject.

There is an urgent need to monitor, analyse and, if possible, intervene in discouses related to new technologies, the body and pleasures ('the rallying point for the counterattack against the deployment of sexuality ought not to be sex-desire, but bodies and pleasure'[50]).

There is a need to review the language and the object of criticism - notions such as 'progressive' or 'modernist' text seem to become less and less meaningful.

And, finally, there is a need to theorize the new forms that power relations take; Foucault's analysis provides the method, but it seems that the disciplinary society and the techniques it employs (defined in term of - scale: individually - object: the forces of the body - modality: constant coersion) are things of the past.

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Notes

I. Michel Foucault, 'Deuxieme entretien avec Raymond Bellour', Les Lettres francaises noII87, June I5, I967, pp 6-9.

2. Michel Foucault, Language, Counter-memory, Practice, pp I39-I40

3. M. Foucault, Language,....., pI48.

4. M. Foucault, The History of Sexuality, vol. I, p 93.

5. M. Foucault, Discipline and Punish, pp 25-26.

6. M. Foucault, Discipline...., p 27.

7. Fredric Jameson, 'postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism', New Left Review , no I46, pp 79-80.

8. Ernest Mandel, Late Capitalism , p I8.

9. See Tessa Morris- Suzuki, 'Robots and Capitalism', in New Left Review, no I47.

IO. M. Foucault, Discipline...., pp I52-I53.

II. Jean Baudrillard, 'The Ecstacy of Communication', in Hal Foster (ed), Postmodern Culture, pp I26-I27.

I2. It can also be understood in terms of the 'death of the social' argument: the continuous simulation of the real produced by TV has eliminated the distinction between real/model, active/passive and has abolished the real. I find this argument, (produced by Jean Baudrillard in In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities,) rather problematic and I would like to avoid discussing it in this paper. For a disscussion of Baudrillard's approach see Philip Hayward's essay 'Implosive Critiques', in Screen Vol 25, no 4-5.

I3. J. Baudrillard,'The Ecstasy....', p I28.

I4. Roland Barthes, 'The Jet-man', Mythologies, pp7I-72.

I5. Hal Foster, '(Post-)Modern Polemics', New German Critique, no 33.

I6. Jean-Francois Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition: a Report on Knowledge, p I5.

I7. In a technocratic society legitimation by performativity is a very probable 'option'. Jameson in his Foreword to The Postmodern Condition, and Morris-Suzuki in her 'Robots and Capitalism' are only two of the many who have criticized this aspect of post-modern societies.

I8. Lyotard, The Postmodern.... , p 60.

20. M. Foucault, The Order of Things, p 387.
19. H. Foster, '(Post)Modern.....', p76.
2I. Judith Williamson, Decoding Advertisements, Ideology and Meaning in Advertising.
22. J. Williamson, ibid., p 45.
23. F. Jameson, Forword to The Postmodern Condition, p xviii.
24. F. Jameson, 'Postmodernism, or the.....', ibid.
25. J. Baudrillard, 'The Ecstasy....', ibid, p I29.
26. J. Williamson, ibid.
27. J. Baudrillard, ibid, p I29. It is worth noting that the eyes are the only organ that survives in the Scotch advertisement.
28. The use of narrative in this ad can be compared to the celebration of 'historical memory' in postmodern architecture (see Charles Jencks, The Language of Postmodern Architecture; Robert Venturi, Learning from Las Vegas). As Hal Foster argues (ibid p 68) : 'what, first of all, is this "history" but a reduction of historical periods to ruling-class styles that are then pastiched?'.
29. J. Baudrillard, ibid, p I24.
30. R. Barthes, Camera Lucida.
3I. Luce Irigaray, as quoted in Craig Owens, 'The Discourse of Others: Feminists and Postmodernism', in H. Foster (ed) , Postmodern Culture, p 70.
32. M. Foucault, History of Sexuality, p I23.
33. M. Foucault, Language,..., p I54.
34. Women's Review, March I986.
35. M. Foucault, The Birth of the Clinic, p I36.
36. Oliver Gillie, The Sunday Times, 23 March I986.
37. Philip Brophy, 'Horrality-the Textuality of Contemporary Horror Films', and Pete Boss, 'Vile Bodies and Bad Medicine' in Screen vol 27, no I.
38. Pete Boss, ibid, p I5.
39. P. Brophy, ibid, p 8.
40. Gillian Skirrow, 'Hellivision', unpublished paper, p 2I.
4I. discussed in J. Baudrillard, ibid.

42. J. Baudrillard, ibid, p I32.
43. Lyotard, for instance, sees postmodernism as a natural continuation of modernism. Habermas, on the contrary, sees the two as absolutely antithetical.
44. F. Jameson, ibid, p 85.
45. P. Boss, ibid, p I5.
46. Marshall Berman, All that is Solid Melts into Air, pp I57-I63.
47. H. Foster, '(Post)Modern Polemics', ibid, p 78.
48. see C. Owen, ibid .
49. G. Skirrow, ibid, p 34.
50. M. Foucault, History of Sexuality, p I57.